

Repentance/Apology The Portrait of an Effective Apology Matthew 5:21-26

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: **22** But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. **23** Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; **24** Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. **25** Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. **26** Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Introductory Statements:

As we study Scripture, we see that the theme of repentance is a prominent issue in our Christian lives.

In **Matthew 3:2**, we are given John the Baptist's core message while he was on earth: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

He communicates the same thing in **Mark 1:15**: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

And as we read **Matthew 3:1-12, esp. vv. 7-8**, we get an idea of his message to the people of his day: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, **2** And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. **3** For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **4** And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. **5** Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, **6** And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. **7** But **when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **8** Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:** **9** And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. **10** And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. **11** I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire: **12** Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. "

Doctor Luke elaborates on John the Baptist's message, as we read in **Luke 3:7-14**: "Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **8** Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. **9** And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. **10** And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? **11** He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. **12** Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? **13** And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. **14** And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages."

And lastly, Christ preached a gospel that centered around repentance as well, as we read in **Matthew 4:17**: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Webster defines repentance: "To feel pain, sorrow or regret for something done or spoken; as, to repent that we have lost

much time in idleness or sensual pleasure; to repent that we have injured or wounded the feelings of a friend. A person repents only of what he himself has done or said. To express sorrow for something past. To change the mind in consequence of the inconvenience or injury done by past conduct. To remember with sorrow; as, to repent rash words; to repent an injury done to a neighbor; to repent follies and vices. Sorrow for any thing done or said; the pain or grief which a person experiences in consequence of the injury or inconvenience produced by his own conduct. Real penitence; sorrow or deep contrition for sin, as an offense and dishonor to God, a violation of his holy law, and the basest ingratitude towards a Being of infinite benevolence. This is called evangelical repentance, and is accompanied and followed by amendment of life. Repentance is a change of mind, or a conversion from sin to God. Repentance is the relinquishment of any practice, from conviction that it has offended God."

And **Strong's dictionary** offers this definition: "Hebrew: **H5162** נָחַם (nâcham) *naw-kham'* - A primitive root; properly to *sigh*, that is, *breathe* strongly; by implication to *be sorry*, that is, (in a favorable sense) to *pity*, *console* or (reflexively) *rue*; or (unfavorably) to *avenge* (oneself): - comfort (self), ease [one's self], repent (-er, -ing, self). Greek: **G3340** μετανοέω *metanoëō met-an-o-eh'-o* - From [G3326](#) and [G3539](#); to *think differently* or *afterwards*, that is, *reconsider* (morally to *feel compunction*): - repent."

Repentance is a core, vital theme in the foundation of the Gospel. And it is also a part of the solid foundation of good interpersonal relationships.

Another word for repentance is the word "Apology."

An apology is effectively synonymous with repentance.

In an apology, you express regret for what you've done in the past.

You also indicate to the person you've offended that you recognize where you've been mistaken, and, in many cases, you communicate your desire to make some form of restitution.

There are several aspects of apology which we will examine today. We're entitling today's message, "The Portrait of an Effective Apology.

There are several qualities of an effective apology. Yet, unfortunately, there are several qualities of an *ineffective* apology, as well.

We'll spend the next several minutes describing what each of these look like.

But first, let's examine five passages in the New Testament that deal with the subject of offenses and apology.

I. Scripture addresses the need for apology in at least five passages in the New Testament:

A. Matthew 18:7 - "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

B. Luke 17:1-4 - "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! 2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."

C. Luke 14:31-32 - "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else,

while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace."

D. Mark 11:24-26 - "But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. 25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

E. Matthew 5:21-26 - "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. 25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

Now, as we prepare to view the portrait of an *effective* apology, let's take a few minutes to look at the portrait of an *ineffective* apology.

II. The Portrait of an Ineffective Apology - Five Attitudes and Actions that Undermine the Sincere Expression of an Apology:

A. Distraction - Avoiding giving someone your complete and undivided attention, while you're sharing an apology. This undermines, and actually *disproves*, that very apology. It indicates insincerity on your part.

B. The Shrug - In this instance, your words say, "I'm sorry," but your *body language* says, "... but so what? What do you expect me to do about it?" It's a *deeply ineffective and undermining* expression of apology.

C. The Cold Shoulder - This form of body language and general behavior is a way of indicating that you relationships are not fully healed. It also contradicts any verbal apology you may make.

D. Blithe Flippancy - In this instance, you act as though nothing important really happened at all. You may say something like, "Sorry." But you don't take the person you offended seriously at all. "Blithe" means to be "merry, sprightly, joyous, glad, or cheerful." This is the ultimate act of insensitivity towards the person you've clearly offended, and it can even be considered insulting to the person you've offended.

E. The "Yes, But" Apology - This apology attempts to toss the blame for *your* offense *back* to the person who's *expressed offense* with you. Just *accept* that you done wrong, and *sincerely apologize* for it!

None of the above behaviors reinforce your apology. In fact, they *undermine* any attempt you may make at *offering* an apology to the one who's offended with you. With that said, let's examine the portrait of an *effective* apology.

III. The Portrait of an Effective Apology:

A. Full, Undivided Attention (As Opposed to Distraction) - This is a powerful way of letting the one you've offended know that you're *genuinely concerned* with their well-being and point of view. **Slow down. Focus on them. Drop everything else you're doing, and GET THE JOB DONE!**

B. The Nod (As Opposed to the Shrug) - This is an acknowledgment to the one you've offended that you see the possible validity of his case. It shows *deep concern* for his person, and for his needs.

C. The Handshake (As Opposed to the Cold Shoulder) - This serves as a visible token of your desire for reconciliation and restoration with the one you've offended.

D. The "You're Right" Apology (As Opposed to the "Yes, But" Apology) - Unconditional apologies strengthen your working relationship with the one you've offended.

E. Restitution (As Opposed to Flippancy) - This speaks HEAVILY to the need for JUSTICE on the part of the one you've offended, and involves the **Five Languages of Apology** (**Expressing Regret** ["I'm Sorry"], **Accepting Responsibility** ["I Was Wrong"], **Making Restitution** ["How Can I Make It Right?"], **Genuine Repentance** ["It'll Never Happen Again"], and **Requesting Forgiveness** ["Please Forgive Me"]), which are used by God to both reinforce, and restore, your relationships with other people.

Concluding Remarks:

Someone has aptly said, "Apologizing does not always mean that you're wrong and the other person is right. It just means that you value your relationship more than [you value] your ego."

In its most basic sense, this is EXACTLY what apology is all about: It's a desire on the part of your offender to make things right, to repair a breach in your relationship, and to restore your friendship. Furthermore, if you can't ever bring yourself to offer an apology for an offense you've perpetrated, then it means that you don't value that relationship.

Forgiveness plays a VITAL role in this process. If you cannot forgive your offender, your relationship will *never* be what it *could*, or perhaps *should*, be. And if you cannot overcome your *pride*, and *admit* to your own wrongdoing in a situation, offering a sincere, heartfelt, and thoroughly evidenced and convincing apology, you'll get *exactly* the *same result*.

