

## 7. FORGIVENESS ISN'T ALL

1. Restoration — the positive counterpart to forgiveness
  - a. Forgiveness is not an end in itself.
  - b. Again, God's forgiveness is the pattern.
  - c. Scripture confirms that reconciliation is the goal of confession and forgiveness (Matt. 5:24; 18:15; cf. Prov. 18:19). "Forgiveness is clearing the rubble of the past so that something fresh and fine may be built in its place." (Adams, 72).
  - d. Often, our willingness to be reconciled is the real test of the genuineness of our forgiveness.
  - e. This double dynamic of forgiveness and rebuilding is evident in Jesus' forgiveness and restoration of Peter (John 21:4–19).

2. Get some help. True reconciliation is often very challenging, and it is better to get some help (e.g., Phil. 4:2–3), than allow yourselves to simply drift apart.

The danger is to drift further apart, by doing nothing, or because initial attempts at rebuilding seem unfruitful. You must not allow this to happen. At the earliest sign of failure, call for the help of a knowledgeable Christian brother or sister or your pastor. If not quickly followed by successful rebuilding activities, the awkwardness of confession and forgiveness is likely to create a polite coldness between the parties who, if nothing is done to counter it, will soon drift into a sterile relationship. (Adams, 75)

3. Paul outlines the elements necessary to this process of relationship rebuilding (2 Cor. 2:7–8).

4. Conclusion:

Clearly, then, restoration is not something that may be taken lightly or done casually. One must consciously work at it. It will take time, creativity, energy, perhaps even money. But it is so important that, apart from this positive side of the watershed, the forgiveness on the other side may be worthless. (Adams, 77)