

NEXT LEVEL RELATIONSHIPS: FORGIVENESS
2 CORINTHIANS 5:17–21; MATTHEW 18:21–22; EPHESIANS 4:26–27

THE BIG IDEA

Forgiveness is the salve that leads us into reconciliation—with God and with one another.

Read through 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 and look for support of these three truths.

1. We must be forgiven by God to be reconciled with Him.
2. If you've been reconciled with God, having been forgiven of your sin, you have a ministry.
3. The effectiveness of your reconciliation ministry is determined by your ability to forgive.

How do Matthew 18:21–22 and Ephesians 4:26–27 lend practical application?

Questions for Groups and Individual Bible Study

For Starters

- Discuss the experience of having dry, cracked skin. What does it feel like? Why does it happen? What are some remedies? Pastor Troy opened his message by comparing forgiveness to the healing properties of salve or balm. Did this comparison help you identify with the need for forgiveness? How so?

Quick-Fire Round

- The word *reconciliation* is only used a few times in the New Testament. Go to www.biblegateway.com and search that word. Consider and discuss what you find.
- How are reconciliation and forgiveness alike? How are they different? Might they be two sides of the same coin? If so, how so?
- What does it mean to be “in Christ” as Paul states it in 2 Corinthians 5:17? How does forgiveness play into this?
- Those who are in Christ are to be ambassadors. Discuss the role of an ambassador. How does this understanding enlighten verses 20–21?

Our relationship with God (vertical) begins with reconciliation.

- a. Paul only uses the word *reconciliation* a handful of times. Each is significant, including this passage in 2 Corinthians. The idea of this word is, “restoration as a result of forgiveness.”
- b. The phrase, “in Christ” in verse 17 speaks of a person having been forgiven and, therefore, reconciled (restored) to God.
- c. It is a given that forgiveness is needed due to sin.