

ry thought captive in obedience to Christ. John 8:31-32 tells us that truth sets us free (but the opposite is true - lies put us in bondage). Both parties verbally agree to stop playing the old mental records of accusation toward each other. For example, they may want to say to each other, "I covenant in the power of the Holy Spirit to refuse to play a mental record of accusation toward you. Instead, I will pray for you and seek to form a new mental image of you and forgive you as Christ has forgiven me." This step allows both parties to deal with their heart issues by being intentional about the thinking process toward each other. This lays the ground work for step four.

4. Report - Read Ephesians 4:29. Each party commits to carefully guard what they report about each other. In offenses we not only replay the hurt over and over but we also give reports to others about the hurts and normally make ourselves the victim and the other the villain. A bad report is sharing negative information about another person that does not need to be shared - the one getting the report has no part in the reconciliation process and no need to know. When we give a bad report we extend invitations to others to join in the offense and adopt a negative view of the one they heard the bad report on. We can obey Ephesians 4:29 and

bring about reconciliation by looking each other in the eye and saying, "I will not give a bad report on you - your reputation is safe with me." The final step in the reconciliation process helps us when we break our covenant with each other.

5. Reconcile – Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-20; 1 Peter 3:8-9; Romans 12:18. The Scriptures cited here give us insights on how to "get back on the path of reconciliation" if we break our covenant of reconciliation. What do you do if you "break" the reconciliation covenant? This final step addresses this and is not intended as an assumption of failure but a commitment to stay on the path of reconciliation. Each party agrees in advance to stay on the path of reconciliation by clearing their conscience and making steps to reconcile if the covenant is broken. The truths of the Scripture passages here are powerful - not counting sins against each other as Christ does to us, not returning evil for evil but blessing each other, seeking to do all you can to be at peace with the other party. Both parties look at each other and say, "I covenant to stay on the path of reconciliation with you. If I fail then I commit to repent and confess so that we can be reconciled. "



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A Covenant of Reconciliation

By Pastor Steve King

Two godly women experienced a relational breakdown with each other and after months of defeat and frustration asked to meet with me. I listened carefully to their story and we sought the Lord together. The Lord revealed to me five principles that I shared with them and helped them process through together. The results were amazing; we had a "revival" in the office! We agreed to meet again after I returned from a three month sabbatical. Our meeting ended up being five months after they had processed through the five steps. They were full of joy and eager to let me know that they were still reconciled and both committed to staying reconciled.

A local church in our area experienced a major relational conflict between their pastor and the elders of the church. I was called in with another pastor to help lead them through an attempt at reconciliation. Over a period of many months we met and the same five principles that I had shared with the two women we applied to this context. The good news is that the pastor and elders reconciled. The pastor moved on to Seminary with the blessing of the elders and the elders have been leading the church (one took the role of senior pastor) and they are flourishing. The elders and their former pastor are committed to

keeping the covenant of reconciliation that they agreed to.

The covenant of reconciliation is designed to be worked through with a facilitator who guides the parties through the process. However, the process can produce positive results even without a facilitator if both parties mutually agree to fully follow the five-step process.

1. Understand - Read James 1:19-20 and Philippians 2:3. Seek first to understand and then to be understood. Both parties should seek first to understand each other's point of view. Evidence that we have done so is that we are able to state the others point of view in a clear and succinct way. You do not have to agree with the point of view - just make sure you understand it well enough to state it clearly. We all long to be understood before we seek to understand. This selfish tendency damages communication so that we "talk past each other" and put our mental and emotional energy into making sure our perspective is heard. If each party verbally summarizes the others viewpoint in one or two minutes and gains assurance that it is accurate then the reconciliation process has begun.

2. Forgive - Read Ephesians 4:32-5:2. Forgiveness means that you release the other person and stop insisting they pay for hurting you. It means that you absorb the pain and hurt and forgive as Christ has

forgiven you. Forgiveness does not mean that you forget the offense but that you intentionally apply the forgiveness you have been given in Christ to the one who wronged you. Each time the offender comes to mind you remember your forgiveness in Christ and apply it to the one who wronged you. Both parties should look each other in the eye and say out loud in a good tone of voice – "Will you forgive me for _____?" and "I forgive you for _____". Only after this is done can you move to step three.

3. Replace – Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; John 8:31-32; Revelation 12:10 and Hebrews 7:25. This step is normally left out in reconciliation attempts. The result is that bitterness and negative mental records of the one who hurt us become engrained in our hearts and minds. This step calls both parties to make a commitment to refuse to mentally replay the offense. Instead they agree to replace the record of old wrongs with a new perspective rooted in gospel truth. Revelation 12:10 says that Satan is an accuser of Christians and so we refuse to join him in his accusing work. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Jesus is the intercessor for God's people and we commit to join Him in interceding for the one who hurt you. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 tells us to bring eve-