

## Introduction

Hurting and being hurt is a reality that is part of living in a community. No one can claim immunity or exemption. We all can recall having hurt someone or having been hurt by someone either intentionally or unintentionally. If that is the case, it behooves us to learn how to deal with hurts. Generally speaking, people deal with wounds in four strategies or ways none of which is biblical, i.e. according to the teachings of the Holy Bible. The common denominator among these four self-defense strategies is the desire to protect the self, without venturing to apply God's word in that matter.

## Human Strategies for Dealing with Hurt

1. Repaying an offense with an offense. This strategy conforms to the Old Testament teachings "eye for an eye". It is applied either directly or overtly; thus a blow is given back as one or two blows, an insult is repaid with a similar or more grievous one either directly or indirectly through what psychologists call "Passive Aggression" through which hurt is applied in a covered manner such as derision, hidden plots over a lengthy period of time.
2. Severing relations. This strategy is used by creating a distance from the offending person

cutting connections while refusing to acknowledge the need to reform feelings and restore relations.

3. *Slandering*. This strategy of retaliating oneself serves to spoil people's reputation by telling stories, either true or untrue ones, just for the sake of marring people in the sight of others.

4. *Ignoring hurt feelings*. This strategy of denying the existence of feelings of pain or hurt is like ignoring the existence of a severe physical wound which by time becomes infected and requires harder treatment.

Using any or all of these four strategies imply arrogance and self-reliance while excluding God from the picture. This is spiritually dangerous because it will make us drift away from the teachings of God.

## **Biblical Strategies for Dealing with Hurt**

### ***1. Precedence of Reconciliation over Worship***

The Holy Bible and the church teach that worshipping takes priority over any other activity including worshipping God. Any quantity or quality of worship will be rejected by God if there is strife against anyone. "*And this is the second thing you*

*do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands" (Malachi 2:13). "Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).*

During the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Spirit -inspired teaching to the holy church is the "holy kiss" which concludes the Prayer of Reconciliation. The priest holds the handkerchief folded in the shape of a triangle symbolizing the veil that separated us from God in the Old Testament. At the end of the prayer, the priest puts aside the folded cloth as a sign of our reconciliation with God. Right after this, the deacon asks the congregation to "greet one another with a holy kiss" (Divine Liturgy of Saints Basil, Gregory, and Cyril). The message conveyed is that reconciliation with God is complete only after reconciliation with one another is achieved. This call by the deacon includes everyone in your life whether present in church or at home or on the playground.

The Prayer of Reconciliation in the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil says, "And make us all worthy, O our Master, to greet one another with a holy kiss, that, without casting us into condemnation, we may

partake of Your immortal and heavenly gift in Christ Jesus our Lord." Do not try to be witty and sit further away to avoid reconciling with someone with a holy kiss. You may be able to deceive yourself and your Spiritual Father, but you certainly cannot deceive God.

The Prayer of Reconciliation in the Divine Liturgy of St Cyril includes three important conditions of reconciliation.

- Without malice "not with a vile sense that defies Your fear." That is how the "greeting of the holy kiss" should be free from any sensuality.
- Without evil "nor with thoughts of guile filled with the wickedness of the traitor, for our conscience is not bent on evil." Our kiss should not resemble that of Judah whose kiss was coming from a double faced conscience.
- With love "rather by the eagerness of our souls and the rejoicing of our hearts, having the great and perfect sign of the love of Your only-begotten Son." The perfect sign is the sign of the cross which we should carry with contentment. Our reconciliation to one another should be unconditional just as our Lord Jesus Christ reconciled us with God through the cross. The church has designed for the ordination of priests

and deacons to follow right after the Prayer of Reconciliation prayer as a reminder of the fact that their service is of a conciliatory nature.

## ***2. The Time Factor***

Prolonging the time of strife is not in favor of peace and reconciliation. The longer the period, the greater the chance for Satan to gain permanent residence in hearts making the gap among people deeper, the removal of strife harder, and the mending of hurt feelings almost impossible. It is a biblical command in both the old and new testaments expressed in Zechariah 8:16, Psalm 4:4 and reiterated by St. Paul in Ephesians 4:25-27 "*Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another. 'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.*" This verse proves that there is nothing wrong with expressing one's feelings provided it is done in the proper way without allowing Satan to control the game. Satan is for strife whereas God is for peace. The only way to kick Satan out is to hasten in reforming feelings and building bridges.

## ***3. The Amount Factor***

Who to forgive and how much one must forgive is often debated based on the wrong interpretation of

St Paul's words to the Romans "*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men*" (Romans 12:18). This verse puts the possibility of forgiveness as directly dependent on the individual's willingness and not ability. The best example is Jesus Christ in His total willingness to forgive those who crucified Him even when he was physically weak and emotionally distraught. He did it to reconcile us with God and yet not everyone is reconciled with God because not everyone is willing to do so. Therefore quantitatively, we should forgive completely and wholly just as Christ did even though the other end might not be willing to do so. In that case, God will accept the forgiveness that has been initiated from our side and our conscience will be free to pray and receive Holy Communion. However do not be the judge and prosecutor at the same time. Allow the church to practice her role in being the judge.

#### ***4. The Initiator***

The world teaches that in any case of strife, it is the offender who should initiate reconciliation. However the Holy Bible teaches contrary to that. Our Lord stated it clearly, "*Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother*" (Mathew 18:15). Naturally God's

children initiate peace whereas Satan's endorse strife. Logically speaking, the person in pain is the one who should go to express his pain to the one who has inflicted it and thus a process of reconciliation starts. God was not in need to reconcile with us and was not going to lose anything. However, in His love and before the sun set, He was looking for Adam to start the process of patching up on the same day even though it took a long time to be completed. Adam did not apologize. Instead he blamed Eve and the latter blamed the serpent. But God gave them the promise that the offspring of the woman will crash the head of the serpent.

## **The Process of Reconciliation**

Reconciliation is a process comprised of four different independent stages: acknowledging – healing – forgiveness – reconciliation.

1. Acknowledging. Admitting mistakes is the first step in the process of reconciliation. Denial springs from pride. Not one side is completely mistaken nor completely innocent. That is what St. James meant by saying "*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed*" (James 5:16).
2. Healing. Takes place when the hurt individual starts to feel comfortable and normal towards

the incident and the person and forgetfulness start to take place. The healing agent is God Himself and nobody else. He is the true physician to our souls and bodies. The person who has caused the hurt cannot heal just as in a car accident one has to go to the hospital and be seen by a doctor. Two agents accelerate the healing: forgiveness and reconciliation.

3. Forgiveness. It is the threshold to healing. Just as one does not wait to be healed before being seen by a doctor; so is the case with forgiveness. One has to forgive in order to be healed. Forgiveness means tearing the arrears of offense and so one has nothing against another confirming that both ends owe each other nothing except forgiveness and reconciliation. These were the Lord Jesus Christ's words, "*Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him*" (Luke 17:3-4).

4. Reconciliation. It is mending severed relations. There is a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. The former is obligatory, unlimited and unconditional whereas the second



while contingent on the first yet it is willful. The super reconciliatory agent is our Lord Jesus Christ who in the midst of His deepest most agonizing pain, fulfilled both requirements:

a. *Forgiveness*: when He cried out "*Father, forgive them*" (Luke 23:34) and

b. *Reconciliation*: when He cried out "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30). However He did not reconcile with those who rejected Him. God instituted a condition in order for Him to be reconciled with us. We have to put on the new man and live a sanctified life in order for us to be reconciled to Him and with Him because darkness and light do not mix.

St. Stephen followed the steps of his Master when he asked for forgiveness to the Jews who were stoning him. "*He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked*" (1 John 2:6).

## **Obstacles on the Road**

Reconciliation with its building blocks of forgiveness and healing can be impeded if the individual suffers from spiritual ailments such as: hatred, intolerance, envy, jealousy, desire for retaliation, lack of forgiveness, great sensitivity, egoism, and pride all of which slow down healing if not blocking it completely. This is likened to physical ailments that

need to be treated first before other diseases can be healed. For example, high sugar levels in diabetics need to be synchronized before undergoing an operation. In Christian counseling, the first thing a counselor does is to make sure that forgiveness is achieved between the two parties he/she is counseling. However, if the offender is not ready to change the offensive hurting manners, reconciliation cannot be said to have been achieved and the offended will not be forced to reconcile. "*Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person.'*" (1 Corinthians 5:13).

## **Warnings**

The reconciliation process might start promptly but the healing process does not. Hurt may reside in the heart and lingers for a while. Do not give up nor lose heart. Do not be moved by a negative feedback from the self. Do not say "Is that what I get?"

## **Biblical Truths Involve Risk Taking**

All God's commandments require a high level of faith and a willingness to take risk in applying them. Some examples are: tithing while not sure if the 90% left in my pocket will be enough to cover one's expenses (Malachi 3:10), St. Peter's obedience to leave the boat and walk on the water at the Lord's invitation (Matthew 14:29); turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), walking the second mile and

reconciling with an offender at the risk of uncertainty of acceptance (Matthew 18:15). Executing the commandments involves risk but reliance on God provides confidence and protection. As a matter of fact it is more risky to depend on ourselves than to depend on God for our protection. Wanting to protect ourselves is a way of protecting ourselves against taking risk in obeying God's commandments.

## **Conclusion**

Reconciliation is a process and a product. It is a process that involves knowledge and application of the word of God regarding how to deal with hurt and how to forgive. The Holy Bible is full of examples to benefit from and to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, being the primary example. Then the product will for sure involve peace and healing. It may take time and the road may not be very smooth but if we rely on the Holy Spirit, our counselor and guide, we will reach the destination which is peace and reconciliation.

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