

How to Ask Forgiveness If You've Offended Someone

The apostle Paul said: Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. – Romans 14:19

This shows us how to approach a person we have offended. If we go with an attitude of frustration we will not promote peace. We will only make it difficult for the one who is hurt. We are to maintain an attitude of pursuing peace through humility at the expense of our pride.

It is the only way to see true reconciliation.

On certain occasions I have approached people I have hurt or who were angry with me, and they have lashed out at me. I have been told I was selfish, inconsiderate, proud, rude, harsh and more.

My natural response has been to say, "No, I'm not. You just don't understand me!" But when I defend myself, it only fuels their fire of offense. This is not pursuing peace. Standing up for ourselves and "our rights" will never bring true peace.

Instead I have learned to listen and keep my mouth shut until they have said what they need to say. If I don't agree, I let them know I respect what they have said and will search my attitude and intentions.

Then I tell them I am sorry I have hurt them.

Other times they are accurate in their assessment of me. I admit, "You are right. I ask your forgiveness."

Once again it simply means humbling ourselves to promote reconciliation. Perhaps this was why Jesus said in the next verses: Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on

the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. –Matthew 5:25–26

Pride defends. Humility agrees and says, “You are right. I have acted this way. Please forgive me.” But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. –James 3:17, emphasis added

Godly wisdom is willing to yield. It is not stiff-necked or stubborn when it comes to personal conflicts. A person submitted to godly wisdom is not afraid to yield or defer to the other person’s viewpoint as long as it does not violate truth.