

Apologizing

Why do people bother to apologize? If someone is mad at me for some reason why do I need to say I'm sorry? Especially if I'm not. For that matter, what does I'm sorry even really mean. I've seen some people who will apologize a dozen times a day for no apparent reason and it seems like they are constantly worried about offending others. I've seen some people who outright refuse to apologize no matter how mean they were or what they did to someone else. Then of course, there's always the forced or automatic I'm sorry that anyone can tell isn't at all sincere.

I think the trick is that apologizing, saying I'm sorry, isn't the first or the last thing we should be doing when we do something wrong. The first step is being willing to acknowledge both to yourself, and out loud to whoever you hurt, that what you did was wrong. The fancy word for that is confessing. But it really comes down to admitting that what you did was wrong. Whether it was an accident, or you were really mad and did it on purpose, being willing to admit that it was wrong is important. Why? Because if you don't believe, or at least won't admit out loud, that you did anything wrong then you can't be sorry for what you did. As far as you're concerned you didn't do anything wrong. If you do feel sorry for something you said or did, but still don't think you did anything wrong, you might want to think about it some more. Our hearts are pretty good indicators of when we make a mistake. If you're still not sure, ask someone you trust. Sometimes we just can't see clearly and we need advice and help from a brother or sister in Christ.

2 Corinthians 7:8-13 - Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. So even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong or of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. By all this we are encouraged.

You see, there are two kinds of being sorry. There's being sorry you got caught and have to face the consequences and then there's being sorry that you did something wrong in the first place. God wants us to be sorry that we sinned in the first place. Paul was sorry that he had to write a letter to the Corinthian church that hurt them but he was glad that it helped the person involved admit the mistake and feel sorry that they did it.

And when we admit we've made a mistake we tend to feel sorry we did it. That feeling strengthens us so that we don't repeat that mistake in the future. When we're sorry we made that mistake, it is natural for us to want to apologize. This is when you might apologize by saying I'm sorry. But being sorry can

show in many different ways in each of us. Some times I'm sorry. doesn't feel like enough. I know for me, when I have made a big mistake and really hurt someone I want to not just apologize but also find some way to serve them and give them rest. I think the trick here is sometimes I run the risk of making the apology more about me than about the person I've hurt. Perhaps that's why there is still one step left.

The final step is to ask forgiveness. This step is for both people. It's the step that allows healing. Without forgiveness there is still an open wound between the two people. The person who was hurt is still hurt or mad about what was done to them. The person who did the hurting may feel frustrated that they have admitted guilt, apologized, and still have the offense held against them. Asking for forgiveness, and giving forgiveness, allows the offense to fall away into the past. It's a way of saying
That was hard, but we're still OK .

It can be hard to truly forgive someone who has hurt you. But it's important, and, it's what God requires of us to keep our relationship with him healthy.

Matthew 6:14-15 - For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

We all make mistakes. From time to time we all are going to hurt someone else's feelings or do something that is wrong. Knowing that doesn't give us the right to just do what we want and not worry about it. But instead it should be a reminder that when we do something wrong it's as important to ask for forgiveness as it is when someone does something that hurts us, to give forgiveness. We want that forgiveness from God so we can have a strong relationship with Him. We should also strive for that strong relationship with each other so that we can strengthen the body of Christ here on Earth.