

1. Offering the gift of forgiveness is OUR PART, but it is only half of the matter.
2. The OTHER PERSON'S PART – *if he accepts our gift* – will include him
 - ✦ admitting his sin, ✦ expressing his sorrow, and ✦ asking for forgiveness!

Conclusion: *Let us know that restarting broken relationships is important!* In this life we all tend to focus a lot on STUFF – *it can consume much of our time and energy!* However, IN THE LIFE TO COME, stuff won't matter – ONLY RELATIONSHIPS! Therefore, God is calling us to proceed through this life with WISDOM → by focusing *MORE on relationships and LESS on stuff!*

An excellent way to focus on relationships is to:

- Rejoice in our relationship with God the Father through Jesus!
- Be quick to ✦ admit, ✦ express, and ✦ ask – *whenever we fall into sin!*
- Take the first step by offering the gift of forgiveness – *whenever anyone sins against us!*

And all God's people said: *Amen!*

“Forgiveness Allows a Relationship to Over!”

Based on Various Passages
 4th Wednesday of Lent – 2010
 March 10 → 11:00 & 7:00

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, so far God has shown us these important aspects of forgiveness:

- Forgiveness is a **promise!**
- Forgiveness is a **gift!**
- Forgiveness **stops the cycle of revenge!**

TODAY, God will show us how **forgiveness can RESTART any broken relationship:**

- First – *GOD restarted our relationship with Him!*
- Now – *WE should restart our relationship with others!*

1. **GOD Restarted Our Relationship with Him:**

- a. Sin DIVIDES – *Before sin people were together with God, but the fall into sin also brought SEPARATION!*
NAS **Isaiah 59:2** “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God...” People have the ability to walk away from God – *to separate themselves from Him* – but they have NO ABILITY TO **RESTART** the relationship. Therefore, *God took drastic action to provide our forgiveness!*

b. Forgiveness UNITES – That is what God wanted – *US BACK WITH HIM* – but He couldn't simply excuse our sin. “**God is love**” (1 John 4:8) – YES, but He is also JUST; therefore, *HE CANNOT COMPROMISE!* Let's think about God's work THROUGH JESUS to make us just / right / acceptable in His sight:

- i. Sin brings separation – So Jesus, *after receiving our sins*, cried out from the cross: “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**” (Matthew 27:46 NIV) In other words: *Why have we been separated from each other?* Jesus was separated for us!
- ii. Sin brings suffering – That is why Jesus also received God's wrath – *the eternal punishment for our sins!* (1 John 2:2) Jesus suffered for us!
- iii. Sin brings death – Since the wages of sin are death, *SOMEONE MUST DIE!* Therefore, Jesus not only took our sins and our eternal punishment *but He also died in our place!* Jesus said: ^{NAS} **John 10:11** “**I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.**”

Jesus endured †separation, †suffering, and †death IN OUR PLACE so that God the Father could offer FULL FORGIVENESS and UNITY to us and to all. *It is by GOD'S LOVING ACTION that our relationship with Him has been restarted!* Therefore, let us show our thanks in WORD and DEED!

2. **WE Should Restart Our Relationship with Others:** Let's consider how we should take action in two different situations: When WE have sinned and when OTHERS have sinned against us.

a. When WE have sinned – It is important for us to take action by contacting the person we sinned against to: ✦ admit our sin, ✦ express our sorrow, and ✦ ask for forgiveness. *Even though we don't know if the person will forgive us or not*, OUR PART is to ✦ admit, ✦ express, and ✦ ask!

For Example: You might recall how Joseph was greatly mistreated by his brothers; then, *years later*, God gave Joseph a powerful position in Egypt. When their father died, *the brothers brought Joseph this message from their father:* ¹⁷ “**...I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.**” Jacob, *on behalf of ten of his sons*, basically ✦ admitted, ✦ expressed, and ✦ asked! Then Joseph spoke these wonderful words to accept their apology: ¹⁹ “**Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?**” ²⁰ **You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good...**” (Gen. 50:17-20 NIV)

Imagine the *relief* and *joy* experienced by Joseph's brothers! God wants us to experience those same blessings as we ✦ admit, ✦ express, ✦ ask, and ✦ receive!

- b. When OTHERS have sinned against us – What we WANT to do versus what we SHOULD do may be two different things!
 - i. We COULD take this attitude: Since he sinned, I will forgive him – *but not until he asks for it*; until then it is okay for me to remain angry!
 - ii. We SHOULD take the *first step* to offer the gift of forgiveness. Remember, such an offering can *lead the sinner* to ✦ admit, ✦ express, and ✦ ask!