



RECONCILIATION

Restoring Broken Relationships



June Hunt



HOPE
for the Heart

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Relationships

JUNE HUNT



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Reconciliation: Restoring Broken Relationships

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Dear friend,

Personally, I know what it's like to feel the pain of a broken relationship—I mean, the hurt, the heartache of a ruined relationship. What agony!

And I know what it's like to yearn and pray for a restored relationship—a heart-to-heart reconciliation, only to have that reconciliation clearly denied. No matter how much I tried or how much I prayed, the relationship was never restored. And it took years for my heart to heal.

However, I also know what it's like to have a reconciled relationship—with wrongs fully forgiven and hurts wholly healed. The pain of the past remains completely in the past. What peace, what ease, what joy—this is ultimate freedom! I consider this reconciled relationship a gift from God—a gift of grace from God.

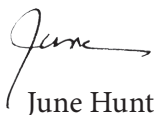
But this kind of reconciliation doesn't “just happen.” It requires a commitment of both *quality time* and *quantity time* to the relationship. This kind of focused attention involves processing pain from the past, forgiving what was fracturing, and rebuilding a new relationship based on renewed trust.

If a reconciled relationship is the desire of

your heart, my sincere prayer is that you will find the path to freedom within these pages. Remember, however, even if you have a heart for reconciliation, *it takes two to reconcile a relationship*. You can't force it, but you can pave the way for it.

As you do all you can do, rest in your relationship with the Lord—you can find your peace in Him.

With shared compassion,



June Hunt

May these words be meaningful to you, as they have been to me: "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*" (Romans 12:18).

RECONCILIATION

Restoring Broken Relationships

In a broken world, things break, including relationships. Miscommunication, misbehavior, and misinformation can unravel the tightest bonds and leave emotions spinning out of control. Everyone experiences relationship breakdowns because imperfect people are connected to other imperfect people. But the Bible makes it clear that our hearts should be a reflection of God's heart, which ultimately is a heart of reconciliation.

Romans 5:8 tells us, *“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Notice how we—the offending party who have sinned—didn't have to apologize first or get cleaned up first in order for God to make a move. Instead, He reached out in sacrificial love, longing for us to be reconciled to Him, longing for us to have a relationship with Him.

In the end, when we learn how to reconcile. We learn how to reflect God's character.

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (Colossians 1:19–20)



DEFINITIONS

Nick is stuck—seemingly chained to his dead-end work with no opportunity for advancement. The environment is stifling and the work mundane, the same day in and day out as he languishes in deepening despair. Nick looks around at his coworkers, their long, tired faces signaling that they have given up on their hopes and dreams. They know they will never aspire to anything more than this.

The man over him sounds the stern command: “Get back to work!” Nick jolts back to the task at hand. Not much time to muse in these surroundings; just work, work, work.

Then, one day Nick realizes he’s had enough. He has to break free from this belittling bondage, so he comes up with a plan.

Yet the Bible tells us that God is ultimately in charge of every plan.

**“In his heart a man plans his course,
but the LORD determines his steps.”
(Proverbs 16:9)**

Broken relationships began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned and disrupted the intimate fellowship they had with God. The need for reconciliation between God and each of us has existed ever since sin entered the world and was passed from one generation to the next! At one time we were enemies of God, going our own way apart from Him, but Christ made it possible for us to be reconciled to God.

The Bible offers this encouragement:

**“For if, when we were God’s enemies,
we were reconciled to him through the
death of his Son, how much more,
having been reconciled,
shall we be saved through his life!”
(Romans 5:10)**

WHAT IS Reconciliation?

When the opportune time comes, Nick escapes. Nick runs.

He feels he has to get away, far away, from the suffocating atmosphere that continually squelches his personal growth and self-esteem. Nick travels over land and sea to the big city, seeking to immerse himself in countless opportunities to start over. In regard to his former work, he recognizes that reconciliation with Phil, the owner, will now be impossible since he quit and disappeared. No matter what, he must make things work in the city.

So many sights and sounds, so many faces and fears. But then Nick's ears are drawn to a voice on a city street, boldly proclaiming something about the Good News, something about the gospel of Christ, someone proclaiming the greatest story ever told—the basic message being ...

**“I want you to know that through
Jesus the forgiveness of sins is
proclaimed to you.”
(Acts 13:38)**

▶ **Reconciliation** is the act of settling or harmonizing differences, especially resolving differences between one another. While a relationship will not always be salvaged, the spirit of reconciliation always reflects the heart of God.

▶ **Reconciliation** between God and human beings is based on:

#1 Atonement, a sacrificial act that covers a person's sins and brings that person into reconciliation with God

- The Hebrew word *kaphar* means “to cover,” which is most often translated as atonement.¹

“Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for” (Proverbs 16:6).

#2 Jesus Christ, who became the sacrifice for our sins

- The Greek word *katallasso*, means “to change or exchange.”² He settled our debt, reconciling us to God and giving us a ministry of reconciliation to others. The Bible confirms this truth:

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

(2 Corinthians 5:18)

I OWED A DEBT I COULD NOT PAY.
HE PAID A DEBT HE DID NOT OWE.³

► **Types of reconciliation⁴**

- *Relational*: to bring a broken relationship into harmony
- *Personal*: to be at peace with our circumstances or with ourselves
- *Financial*: to bring accounting records into agreement
- *Spiritual*: to be at harmony with God

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE OF RECONCILIATION

Joseph (Genesis 37:2–45:15)

The Bible is a relational textbook. The Old Testament story of Joseph is one of family conflict—full of jealousy, bitterness, and betrayal. Surrounded by older brothers who hate him, Joseph is treated unmercifully, sold into slavery, and destined to live in a pagan country under extreme pressure. Few of us escape the pain of a loved one's rejection. The all-too-easy response is to cling to the offense and, in doing so, reject the heart of forgiveness.

Even in the face of false accusation, Joseph does not lose his faith. Over time he is promoted from a prison to a palace and becomes second in power to Pharaoh. Ultimately, God orchestrates events in Joseph's life to bring about a showdown with his brothers. He must now choose between hardening his heart or reflecting God's heart. With immense compassion, Joseph forgives his brothers and initiates the ministry of reconciliation. (See Genesis 37–50.) The Bible describes this tender moment:

**“And he kissed all his brothers
and wept over them.**

**Afterward his brothers talked with him.”
(Genesis 45:15)**

WHAT IS Alienation?

If anyone needs Good News, it's Nick.

He is alienated from all he's ever known—totally alone. Yet he encounters a man who talks about the great love of God and the great sacrifice of God: sending His Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for all of our sins and then rose from the dead three days later. Nick learns that he can have his sins forgiven and that he will go to heaven, but he also discovers that God wants to be involved in his life right now, guiding him and helping him. Nick cannot seem to resist such irresistible love, so his new friend, Raul, leads him into a relationship with Jesus. They immediately form a close bond as brothers in Christ. Raul is the embodiment of this verse:

**“A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity.”
(Proverbs 17:17)**

► **Alienation** occurs when a person withdraws or separates from another person, causing one to be excluded from others.⁵

- The Hebrew word *rāchaq* means to “be or become far, distant” or to be “removed.” The word normally applies to great distances but can also apply to alienation between individuals.⁶ The Hebrew word

zur most often refers to “a stranger” but is sometimes translated “estranged.”⁷

“He has alienated my brothers from me; my acquaintances are completely estranged from me” (Job 19:13).

- **Alienation** in Greek is *apallotriō*, which means “to estrange,” that is, “to be shut out from one’s fellowship and intimacy.”⁸ The word is translated “exclude,” “separate,” or “alienate.”

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Colossians 1:21–22).

► **Types of alienation**⁹

- *Relational*: unfriendliness or hostility toward friends, family, or the values of others
- *Personal*: withdrawal from people, difficulty in developing relationships with others
- *Legal*: alienation of affections (marriages ending in divorce)—the conveyance or transfer of property to another
- *Spiritual*: separation from God because of sin