

The Twelve Steps – a Spiritual Journey: Step Eight: Became Willing

Written by Chris Jordan, the President of Overcomers Outreach of Canada.

In Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus said: *“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”* This Scripture – the Biblical basis for Step Eight – reveals to us something about the heart of God.

Here, Jesus tells us that making amends in our relationships with one another is more important even than worship! We can’t love God if we don’t love people. And that’s why a vital part of our spiritual journey is expressed in Step #8:

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

This step involves a time of prayer and thoughtful reflection. In *A Hunger for Healing*, J. Keith Miller tells us that there are three parts to this step. First, he tells us that we need to embrace the hurts in our lives, instead of running from or denying them. I know that when I first came to Overcomers, one of my biggest character defects that I discovered was denial and blaming others. It was hard to admit where I had made mistakes! Secondly, Miller says we need to write down (beside the names of those with whom we have a broken relationship) our own part in what happened. Finally, we are ready to do what we need to do to let go of our pain.

Before we are ready to go out and make amends to these people, Miller adds, “we will need to gain humility and to release our pain and anger about what others have done to us. That comes through forgiving them.” I heard someone say once that unforgiveness is like drinking a bottle of poison and waiting for the other person to die. When you refuse to forgive someone, you aren’t hurting them, you are only hurting yourself. Forgiveness is not a feeling, it’s a choice to release someone from a debt and say, “You don’t owe me anything.” Once you have done that, it’s easier to go and make amends to that person for your part in the broken relationship.

Let’s be real here. Forgiveness is one of the hardest things we ever have to do in our lives! But it’s also one of the most important and helpful ones. If we won’t forgive others, the Bible says that God won’t forgive us. But when we choose to forgive those who have hurt us, God in turn forgives us of our many sins.

Eighth Step Prayer:

“Higher Power, I ask your help in making my list of all those I have harmed. I will take responsibility for my mistakes, and be forgiving to others as you are forgiving to me. Grant me the willingness to begin my restitution.” Amen! (*Prayers for the Twelve Steps – A Spiritual Journey*).