

Reconciliation, God's Heart

We see the importance of the message of **reconciliation** in Matthew 5:24 - "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

The following excerpts are from a letter written by a son to his father seeking restoration and reconciliation expressing God's heart in a very personal and healing way. Its message can be applied to any personal relationship that is broken and in need of being healed and restored.

Dear Dad,

This letter is in response to your request, during my recent visit with you, that I summarize some of my thoughts on our relationship as father and son during my growing-up years. My primary purpose is to help you minister to others wrestling with issues of fathering. Of course, secondarily, writing these things down will give us a chance to review our conversations during our time together and perhaps be led by the Spirit into new insights and new healing.

Before I begin reviewing the impact our relationship had on my growing-up years, I'd like to reiterate my appreciation for your willingness to make yourself vulnerable, that you might be God's instrument of healing wherever possible. I know you would like to make right those things you would now do differently if you could go back and have another chance at fathering. Although going back isn't possible, we serve the God of the impossible, who deals with us just as we are now, and who can bring healing for past wounds received and forgiveness for wounds given.

I am thankful to our Lord that you and I now have the relationship with our heavenly Father that was missing when we were first paired as father and son. I am thankful that, even now, He is working within us to complete that which He started. We are both new creations in Christ. The old is past, the new has come. We can review the past to learn for the present and future, and we can spotlight those areas still needing His healing and forgiveness, but our focus is on Him who lovingly holds our past, present and future in His hands.

I forgive you for everything you did which served to wound me. Of course, I was not the perfect son, and my rebellious and sinful responses to your fathering must have at times wounded you. For this, I ask your forgiveness.

In [A Call To Manhood](#), David Long mentions the crucial period of ages three to seven, when a boy needs to begin moving from a close relationship to his mother toward a close relationship with his father. Once again, between work and building the house, the amount of time you and I spent was limited, preventing us from bonding as father and son. I desperately needed my Dad to come alongside me and affirm me as his son, a man-in-the-making.

One of the key things a son needs is for a father to come alongside him and pass on the skills he has learned, and the manly spirit and character behind the skills. Somehow, this never got done. Partly, this was a function of your busyness, but partly it was just your temperament, which apparently caused you to feel you could get things done a lot more easily by not wasting time on teaching and training. Of course, you were correct, if efficiency were the key decision-making criteria. After all, imparting the skills of manhood require much time, patience and consistency. The result was that you built our house while I grew up, yet I never learned how to build things, to do carpentry or electrical or plumbing work. You tore apart and rebuilt our car engine, and yet, I never learned auto repair. You

always had a garden, but I never learned to garden (other than weeding).

You had a Ph.D., but didn't show me how to study. You balanced career and a number of other pursuits, but never shared time management. You showed me how to balance a checkbook, but I never learned how to budget. You did all the house repairs, but I never learned much beyond changing a light bulb. You were on the school board ten years, but I never attended a meeting. The list could go on (e.g., not learning how to camp, set up a barbecue, carve a turkey, fish, hunt), but the principle was established. You had your world where you did your thing, and I had to find my own thing.

However, my main problem remained. Without a father to come alongside me and show me the way to manhood, I entered adolescence, totally unprepared either for my teen years or the manhood which must follow.

The feelings of having been turned aside and rejected as a young boy (even if these feelings did not reflect the reality of your heart), and of not being found fit -- for some mysterious reason -- to "go into the fields" with my Dad during my earlier boyhood, seemed crippling, leaving me with an empty void. In addition, I was crippled by not having the basic skills so many of my male peers had. I lacked a sense of self-acceptance. I had a deep feeling of hopelessness that things could ever get better.

Becoming a Christian at age twenty-eight provided a fresh beginning in many ways. But in other ways, things remained the same. For one thing, I have found it difficult emotionally to accept the notion that God the Father really accepts me for who I am, and that He can truly delight in me, unless I'm able to perform on some level that I think is beyond my capacity to consistently maintain.

You might pray that the Lord would do a powerful work within me, transforming me by the renewal of my mind and conforming me to the likeness of His beloved Son.

Once again, Dad, I want to affirm you as my father. I hope you have not felt too wounded or grieved by what I've written. I trust the Holy Spirit to work it all together for your good. I love you, I have forgiven you, and I am encouraged to see what the Lord can do in a man who is willing to let the Potter continue His work to the end. I hope to follow your godly example, being teachable and open to re-shaping by the Master Potter. In that, there is hope.

Much love in Christ,
Your son,

It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this letter to bring healing, restoration and reconciliation in your relationship with others, as well as being used to help others within your circle of influence.