

# More Like Christ

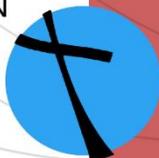
EXPLORING CHRISTIAN FAITH PRACTICES

February | Hurting and Healing

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GEORGETOWN  
CHRISTIAN  
REFORMED  
CHURCH



## Introduction

### LISA TURKEURST, IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THIS WAY (EXCERPTS)

Disappointment roars with earth-shattering thunder with a call from the doctor and a diagnosis that flips life upside down. The discovered affair. The hidden addictions. The child you don't even know anymore. The fire. The bankruptcy. The breakup. The death so unexpected you keep calling their number just hoping this is all a bad dream and surely they'll answer this time.

I don't know when these disappointments, big and small, are coming my way. They just show up. An unexpected guest that I don't know what to do with.

This guest of disappointment exhausts me.

But I don't have to tell you that.

It frustrates and exhausts you too.

Life isn't turning out the way we thought it would.

*Disappointment.* Whether you've used that word or not, it's there. And I want to wrap a little vocabulary around the feelings that are affecting us more than we realize or dare to verbalize.

It's that feeling things should be better than they are. People should be better than they are. Circumstances should be better than they are. Finances should be better than they are. Relationships should be better than they are.

And you know what? You're right. Everything should be better than it is. It's no wonder that I'm exhausted and that you are too...

The disappointment that is exhausting and frustrating you? It holds the potential for so much good. But we'll only see it as good if we trust the heart of the Giver.

You see, disappointment can be a gift from God that feels nothing like a gift at all. It's unexpectedly sharp, and the Giver can seem almost cruel as we watch someone unwrap it. Their fingers will bleed. They will feel tricked and so very tempted to stop trusting that anything good can be found within. They will most certainly question the One who allowed it to come their way.

But disappointment isn't proof that God is withholding good things from us. Sometimes it's His way of leading us Home. But to see this and properly understand what's really going on, we must take a step back and view it in the context of God's epic love story. The one in which He rescues and reconciles humanity to Himself.

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proof that God is  
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## Series Theme Overview

Each month we will focus on one faith practice, seeking to model our lives on Jesus.

Month	Theme	Topics	Key Scriptures
September	Welcoming	Hospitality, listening, befriending	Luke 15:2, Matthew 25:35
October	Praying	Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication	Luke 5:16, Matthew 6:9-13
November	Doing Justice	Righteousness, relief, development, reform	Luke 4:18-19, Matthew 14:14, Micah 6:8
December	Advent		
January	Working and resting	Vocation, sabbath	Colossians 3:23, Mark 6:31
February	Hurting and Healing	Grieving, forgiving	John 11:33-36, Matthew 18:21-35
March	Stewarding	Resources, bodies, creation	1 Peter 4:10, James 1:17, Genesis 1:28
April	Neighboring	Knowing and loving those of other faiths, peacemaking, witnessing	Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-37
May	Worshipping	Reading scripture, music, praise	Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 4:12, Ephesians 5:19



## In this Guide

If you used our connection guides in the past, you'll see several familiar features.

1. **More Like Christ through scripture** – An invitation to read applicable biblical texts and reflect on what they mean for your life.
2. **More Like Christ in our tradition** – We explore the ways our reformed worldview informs how we understand the call to live More Like Christ
3. **More Like Christ in community** – Devotionals, articles, songs, videos, prayers, discussion questions, and other resources for personal reflection and/or small group discussion
4. **Additional resources** - At the end of this guide we offer additional resources for you to learn more and dig deeper.

## Resource Table

In collaboration with Penny Hoezee and the library we have a wonderful resource table. Located in the Gathering Area, this spot will be filled with resources connected with each month's theme. There will be books, articles, curriculum, and more. You are invited to borrow these items.

Also look for the kid's table! This spot will feature resources just for children: Children's books, videos, coloring pages, and more!



## Speaker Series

On the **second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at noon** in the Sanctuary we invite you to our "More Like Christ" speaker series. Each month a special guest will share their insights with us. These presentations will also be available via [our YouTube channel](#) for those who cannot attend in person.



Available  
online

**January 11**

**Rev. Mark Stephenson**

CRCNA

*Five Key Questions for the Third Third of Life*

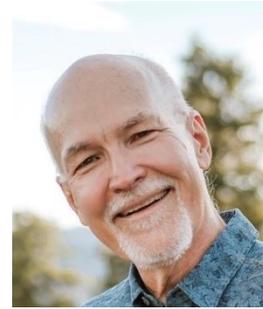


**January 25**

**Rev. Ken Baker**

Pastor, life coach

*Serving God Through Work*



**February 8**

**Jolynn Van Wienen**

Executive Director,  
[Starlight Ministries](#)



**February 22**

**Rev. Eric Kas**

CRC Safe Church  
Ministry Consultant

*Hurting and healing*



Upcoming

**March 8**

**Dr. Bill Van Groningen**

Former chaplain, Trinity  
Christian College

*Stewarding the Soul*



**March 22**

**Steve Baker**

Barnabas Foundation

*Stewardship*



## More Like Christ through Scripture

Feb.	Text	Your one sentence takeaway
1	John 11:33-36	
2	Matthew 18:21-35	
3	Psalms 34:15-22	
4	Hebrews 4:14-16	
5	I Corinthians 12:1-10	
6	Psalms 103	
7	Matthew 4:23-25	
8	2 Corinthians 1:1-7	
9	Genesis 50:15-21	
10	Romans 8:1-17	
11	Romans 8:18-30	
12	Romans 8:31-39	
13	Hebrews 2:14-18	
14	Genesis 33:1-4	
15	Psalms 107:1-9	
16	Psalms 107:10-16	
17	Psalms 107:17-22	
18	Psalms 107:23-32	
19	Psalms 107:33-43	
20	Isaiah 61:1-3	
21	I Peter 5:1-11	
22	Matthew 5:23-25	
23	Ephesians 4:31-32	
24	Matthew 8:15-35	
25	James 5:13-20	
26	Romans 12:9-21	
27	Psalms 91	
28	Revelation 21:3-5	

## More Like Christ in our Tradition

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### HEIDELBERG CATECHISM – Q&A 126-127

Q. What does the fifth petition mean?

A. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" means: Because of Christ's blood, do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are, any of the sins we do or the evil that constantly clings to us. Forgive us just as we are fully determined, as evidence of your grace in us, to forgive our neighbors.

Q. What does the sixth petition mean?

A. "And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one" means: By ourselves we are too weak to hold our own even for a moment. And our sworn enemies— the devil, the world, and our own flesh—never stop attacking us. And so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong with the strength of your Holy Spirit, so that we may not go down to defeat in this spiritual struggle, but may firmly resist our enemies until we finally win the complete victory.

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### OUR WORLD BELONGS TO GOD – PARAGRAPHS 3-4

3. Still, despair and rebellious pride fill the earth: some, crushed by failure or broken by pain, give up on life and hope and God; others, shaken, but still hoping for human triumph, work feverishly to realize their dreams. As believers in God, we also struggle with the spirits of this age, resisting them in the power of the Spirit, testing them by God's sure Word.

4. Our world, fallen into sin, has lost its first goodness, but God has not abandoned the work of his hands: our Maker preserves this world, sending seasons, sun, and rain, upholding all creatures, renewing the earth, promising a Savior, guiding all things to their purpose.

### CREATION REGAINED (EXCERPTS) BY ALBERT M. WOLTERS

The effects of sin touch all of creation; no created thing is in principle untouched by the corrosive effects of the fall. Whether we look at societal structures such as the state or family, or cultural pursuits such as art or technology or bodily functions such as sexuality or eating, or anything at within the wide scope of creation, we discover that the good handiwork of God has been drawn into the sphere of human mutiny against God...

...[God] refuses to abandon the work of his hands – in fact he sacrifices his own Son to save his original project. Humankind, which as botched its original mandate and the whole creation along with it, is given another chance in Christ; we are reinstated as God's managers on earth. The original good creation is to be restored.

## More Like Christ in Community

### Hurting

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LIVE IN GRACE, WALK IN LOVE - BOB GOFF

FOR GOD TO GIVE AWAY LOVE, HE HAD TO UNDERSTAND SADNESS. LEAN INTO A SAVIOR WHO KNOWS WHAT IT'S LIKE.

*Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.* Romans 12:15

If you find yourself in a hard spot right now, I want to remind you that love still wins and God does not overlook those who mourn. Maybe you lost a loved one this year or one of the headlines splashing the evening news actually happened to you.

Maybe you lost a home or a job, or you're praying for a child to end the straying and come back home. Perhaps it was a relationship that went sideways, and you're feeling terribly lonely. Those are real hurts.

In those circumstances, God says evil will not win.

God wants to remind us we're remembered even if our circumstances are folding in over our heads. God says He's near to the brokenhearted. He says He surrounds those who mourn. When we're down, God understands our sorrow and kneels down next to us.

It's okay to be sad. In fact, mourning is a brave thing to do. It means we're holding our hurt rather than hiding from it, putting it in our cupped hands for God to hold with us. Mourning is a bold stare-down with evil while God declares evil cannot have another inch. That's why He sent Jesus to fight for us, to protect us, to take the brunt of evil's sting.

Our strength is made up of stuff stronger than threats, disease, and loss. If something is weighing you down, hope in Him can set your eyes upward. Let His love wipe away your tears.

*In what ways did Jesus experience the same pains we do?*

*Why might it be more damaging to try to hide from our difficulties and push them aside than it would be to confront them and mourn?*

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PAIN DOES NOT EQUAL SHAME – CRYSTAL DAIZ

It is a mistake to believe that your past no longer affects you. If that were true, we would not remember all the lessons we've learned from our experiences: from the simplest of things like learning to ride a bike to the more difficult realities that have caused us pain. Our understanding of past experiences teaches us how to respond to similar situations. Almost always we react instinctively to the things we've already experienced when we encounter them again.

Many of us have prayed for the difficult memories of our past to be erased. In fact, I'm convinced that every individual ever born has wanted this at some point in their lives. Yet those of us who are in Christ should not desire to forget our past. It was in darkness that we saw his light. In the depths of human



depravity, Christ sustained us. Why then would we want to forget what we've been sovereignly rescued from? Should we forget what the Lord has done?

We mustn't confuse our sins being washed away with our past being washed away. The "sea of forgetfulness" contains our sins, not our memories. I don't know about you, but I still cry from the abuse and hurt I endured in my life. A face, a smell, a sight, a touch can bring back the pain.

But when you are in this place, do not hide in shame, for the Lord inclines his ear to you and does not hide his face.

The healthy way to respond to a past experience that has caused pain is to trust what God is teaching you, to forgive, to be aware of what can happen. And then to use wisdom and discernment going forward. The unhealthy way of responding is to doubt God's love for you, to become fearful or unforgiving, to never trust anyone. All of us have reacted to our past experiences in both ways.

God has proved himself true, and he always will.

Joseph spent years as a slave and was falsely imprisoned. In the end, it was all part of God's sovereign plan. I wonder if haunting memories of being thrown in a well by his brothers, being sold as a slave, and the smell of his former prison cell ever truly escaped him. Probably not. When he saw his brothers again, imagine what went through his mind. Did he relive his painful past? We know he didn't forget because he sought a place to weep after seeing them again.

Nonetheless, he forgave them: "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" (Gen. 45:4-5).

Joseph saw his family reconciled and restored. He knew God had not abandoned nor forgotten him. God proved himself true. He always does.

So to you who are beloved of Christ: it's OK if you find yourself reliving the pain of the past. For it only magnifies Christ, who was by your side. He was there with every tear, providing you with comfort and strength. "All things must work together for good for those who love God," says the apostle Paul. We seldom see that in the moment of our pain. It may take years, but God's promise never fails.

*What do you think about the old aphorism of "forgive and forget"?*

*Why might processing our pain and working through grief be more powerful than simply erasing it?*

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#### MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS, THIRTY FIRST DAY – NEAL PLANTINGA

Lord Jesus Christ, enemy of darkness, you did not hold yourself above human evil but entered it, suffered from it, died to atone for it. I trust and thank you. Because of your love, you absorbed great evil. The sign of your love is your blood shed for sinners. It will never lose its power.

Your courage inspires me. You showed strength in the face of trouble. You ministered despite the ignorance and scorn of your own people's religious leaders.

You were good to Peter, who denied you.  
You fed the last supper to Judas, who betrayed you.  
You went on loving the disciples, who deserted you.  
You forgave the men who crucified you.  
You reassured Thomas, who doubted you.

You were a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but you were also a man of immense and stirring courage.

Bless people across the world today who struggle to find the strength to face their troubles:

those who care for people with dementia  
people trapped in paralyzed bodies  
children trying to be brave after a parent abandoned them  
bullied middle schoolers  
seventeen-year-olds resisting the temptation to complete suicide  
civil rights workers who persist nonviolently in the face of taunts, blows, and curses

Lord Jesus Christ, lend your courage to them all. Somehow let them know they are not alone. Give them an uncanny peace in the face of trouble. Be their strength and salvation.

Be mine too. I am not naturally brave, but if you are beside me today, I will manage. Give me courage to go straight forward. Clear a path. I don't know the way ahead, but you do. You know where I must go, and when, and how fast. Lord Jesus Christ, I want to step forward, but always behind you. In your strong name, Amen.

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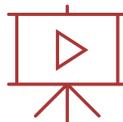
### JESUS, DRAW ME EVER NEARER – KEITH GETTY AND MARGARET ELLEN BECKER

Jesus draw me ever nearer  
As I labor through the storm.  
You have called me to this passage,  
And I'll follow, though I'm worn.

Jesus guide me through the tempest;  
Keep my spirit staid and sure.  
When the midnight meets the morning,  
Let me love You even more.

May this journey bring a blessing,  
May I rise on wings of faith;  
And at the end of my heart's testing,  
With Your likeness let me wake.

Let the treasures of the trial  
Form within me as I go -  
And at the end of this long passage,  
Let me leave them at Your throne.



<https://youtu.be/amqP9rvikvg>

## Healing

### A STORY OF PAIN AND FORGIVENESS



[https://youtu.be/4DMw2\\_ClwNw](https://youtu.be/4DMw2_ClwNw)

Two men forever linked by an ultimate tragedy.

*What stood out to you? What makes this story of forgiveness so powerful?*

*Matt says, "I can't say this is a beautiful story and it's got a great ending, it doesn't. It's nasty. It's real. And it's something I'm going to struggle with for the rest of my life." Why might acknowledging the deep pain and avoiding minimization help the healing process?*

*How did Pastor Eric's faith inform his approach toward forgiveness and his pursuit of a relationship with Matt?*

*How does our faith propel us toward forgiveness and reconciliation?*

### THE MIRACLE OF FORGIVENESS- DANIEL MEETER

The disciple Peter thinks he's being generous when he offers to forgive the brother who sins against him seven times (Matt. 18:21-22). The Lord Jesus takes it past generosity when he answers "seventy times seven" (or 77 times; it's immaterial which). He means that forgiveness is not about the sin, or even about the brother—it's about yourself, your attitude toward the world.

Because, really, don't you often have to forgive your brother 77 times for the very same sin? Maybe you forgave him once, but then you wake up again each morning with the lousy consequences of his sin against you, which endure despite your having forgiven him. And you have to forgive him all over again for that same sin.

You don't have to be a believer to understand the liberating power of forgiveness. When you forgive, you let go of the sinner's drag on you; it's pure human wisdom. But in the parable that follows Peter's question, our Lord moves forgiveness into a "God thing." You can read the parable for yourself, but what I'm saying is that in order to forgive your brother who sins against you countless times, you have to enter the forgiveness of God, which is outside of time, outside of results, outside of cause and effect. That's because it's not based on any improvement in the sinner. Rather, as the catechism says, "because of Christ's atonement, God will never hold against me any of my sins nor my sinful nature which I need to struggle against all my life" (Lord's Day 21).

If you think about it, you're already forgiven for the sins you'll do in the future. You need to confess them—but not to be forgiven, because forgiveness is a result of the atonement. You need to confess

them in order to enter into the mind of Christ and the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, which in themselves are equal to eternal life.

Yes, think about it. And think about the Apostles' Creed, which you repeat every week. "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." The forgiveness of sins is a work of the Holy Spirit, and it is just as much a miracle of God as the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Indeed, it is a step of the Spirit on the way to that resurrection and that life.

When you forgive the sin of your brother (or sister, or mother, or father, or boss, or child), you enter the miracle of God's forgiveness out of time, by which I mean the eternal forgiveness of God in the atonement, which the Holy Spirit works among us here in time and space.

How else do you generate "the resurrection of the body" when it's these old, sinful, scarred, and guilty bodies that are to be resurrected? Do you see how the forgiveness of sins is the work of the Spirit before the resurrection of the body? How else do you express "the communion of saints" if not by forgiveness, because one of those saints is your insufferable uncle who makes the same comment every time you see him, and you have to forgive him again and again in order to take communion beside him.

Oh, it's a joyful thing, the forgiveness of sins. God forgives you seventy-seventy-seventy times for that same stupid sin you keep on doing—not because you deserve it, but because of this strange atoning commerce between the Father and the Son, which the Spirit applies to you. As far as you can see, that looks like love. That's what you do when you love somebody. You know it. And the Lord says Yes.

*Meeter interprets Jesus' command to forgive "seventy times seven" times to mean that "forgiveness is not about sin, or even about the brother—it's about yourself, your attitude to the world." What does he mean by that? Do you agree? Why or why not?*

*How does forgiveness become not just a healthy human discipline, but actually a "God thing"?*

*What does forgiveness have to do with Christ's atonement, the resurrection of our bodies, and the communion of the saints?*



*Does constantly forgiving "your insufferable uncle" mean you cannot ask him to stop making rude comments? In case of really serious sins done against us, does that mean we may not take legal action? And in case of violence perpetrated against us may we take the steps necessary to prevent further ill treatment?*

*How is forgiveness related to love? Does forgiveness automatically lead us to reconciliation with the person(s) who have hurt us?*

*What is a biblical definition of forgiveness? Can you offer an example of times when you've had to forgive others? What did that look like? What did it feel like?*

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## FIGHTING FAIR: STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH CONFLICT BY REV. MARC NELESEN

“When you fight, fight fair.”

That’s one of my favorite lines to deploy at a wedding service. I say it because I want to publicly acknowledge that conflict in relationships is normal and inevitable. I also say it because I’d like everyone to think about stewarding their conflicts—in their own lives and in the lives of their congregations.

Many of us were raised in homes where topics like conflict, sex, and money were not a part of polite conversation. If we did talk about them, we joked about them or spoke of them in the context of others’ stories. As a result, many of us are somewhat ill-equipped to know how to deal with them as grown-ups. Healthy conflict is no exception. Few of us have a reservoir of good models to draw from in times of need.

That’s as true of relationships within the church as it is in a marriage. Conflicts in congregations are inevitable. Church members get angry with each other. They experience disappointment. They are hurt by each other or by their pastors.

Wouldn’t it be nice if the church had a reputation for handling conflicts in a Christ-like way? What if the local church were the only place in town where a community took seriously the ways we are prone to hurting each other? What if congregations were intentional and hospitable about providing space for hurts to be spoken and heard? Such places are ripe for forgiveness and reconciliation. I suspect that people would be drawn to a community that practices this kind of truth-telling.

Since conflict is inevitable, here are some practices that can help us fight fair with each other.

**Own the pain.** We seldom realize that underneath our anger and disappointment is pain. It’s hard for many of us to engage our pain because doing so acknowledges our vulnerability. Often anger feels like a safer emotion to express. But vulnerability is a powerful place from which to speak of our needs in a relationship, and our needs are easier for others to hear than our anger. Speaking of our needs opens doorways for others to speak of theirs as well. Often we cannot articulate our needs unless we’ve experienced difficulty and pain. For this reason, healthy conflict is an intimate affair that can allow relationships to deepen. Sometimes we avoid conflict because we are afraid of this intimacy.

**Avoid avoiding.** My grandfather used to say “Let sleeping dogs lie.” In relationships, this is bad advice. Avoiding, delaying, or retreating makes things worse. Hanging on to tension in a relationship is like holding a beach ball underwater: it takes a lot of energy. Eventually that energy is going to come out sideways. Another way of avoiding is blaming. Fixing blame is a lot easier than fixing the relationship. When we blame someone, we are choosing to distance ourselves from that person and from our pain. The antidote for avoidance is caring engagement.

**Name the elephant in the room.** Most of the time, the elephant of pain, anger, or disappointment is our own. Elephants can be scary, heavy, and unpredictable. They need to be handled with care. Often, however, we euphemize them (perhaps by saying “I was disappointed” when really we were ticked off). Sometimes we joke about them, or we tell ourselves, “It’s not nice for Christians to be angry,” and so minimize the raw truths of our lives. We ought not bear false witness about our pains. Instead we ought to

name them for what they are. We may be surprised to find that the elephant was not as big or as scary as we had feared.

**Practice non-damaging honesty.** “Speak the truth in love,” says Paul. But we ought to name our hurts and angers in a way that does not inflict injury to ourselves or to others. That means discerning whether the relational bridge between us can carry the weight of what we need to say. Speaking the truth in love may mean not saying all of it in one sitting. The best place to start is by using “I” language (“I hurt”; “I am angry”; “I am disappointed”). If we start with “you,” the other person will feel accused and his or her defenses will rise; no one is open when on the defensive. What we say should be our own concern, not someone else’s.

**Engage your adversary in a meaningful way.** Relationships are more important than issues, and they are worth fighting for. When disagreeing, make sure everyone has emotional safety. Don’t do conflict through email. If the issue is with the pastor, ask for an appointment over coffee or lunch. For some, this may come as a surprise, but after years of pointed emails and hit-and-run comments right after worship, it’s likely the pastor would deeply respect face-to-face disagreement. I have grown the most from parishioners who, instead of just throwing grenades, care enough to make time for dialogue and mutual listening.

**Change the goal.** In conflict, we often want two things: to be right and to change the other person. Relationships will not deepen unless we surrender these goals. Relationship is a dynamic process in which both parties change; conflict is an important tool for achieving mutual change. Most of our relationships, then, are an act of ongoing negotiation. To insist on being right is to make the goal of conflict scoring points, when what is really needed is deeper understanding. Shifting from certainty to curiosity makes room for mutual learning. Certainty nails things down; curiosity opens them up. When someone hurts us, certainty causes us to assume we know why. That certainty is not helpful when we want to fight fairly. A learning posture challenges our assumptions—and that’s why we generally resist that posture. Starting a conversation with “Can you help me understand?” instead of “Why do you always...?” opens possibilities instead of closing them. Humility, listening, and communicating care are much more fruitful in relationship than being right.

**Treat communication as a cross-cultural experience.** We shouldn’t presume that our way of seeing and remembering is the same as another’s. Seeing things differently doesn’t mean either party is wrong. I suspect that many conflicts stem from our difficulty in hearing each other and articulating what’s going on inside us. It’s always wise to repeat in your own words what someone else says, and follow up by asking, “Is this what you mean?” This signals that you are listening and trying to understand the other person’s perspective.

**Wherever possible, apologize without offering explanations.** Nothing ruins good apologies more than explanations. In order to find resolution, our hurts need articulation and validation. Open-ended apologies help that along. Whenever we apologize, we open large doors through which grace can come in and go out. Apologies can lower the drawbridge of even the most fortified castle for at least a moment. And that moment can change everything.

**Guard your soul**—not from outer attacks, but from within. Recognize your own part in conflict. Don't enter into a disagreement with high expectations; you may not hear the apology you're hoping for. Presume and pray for the best for your adversary. Even if you can't stand a person, let God redeem those parts you can't handle while he is redeeming those parts in you. Remember that forgiveness is not forgetting; it is remembering differently. As Lewis Smedes once noted, "It is as if God has said to us, 'Try forgiveness on one another.' It worked for me."

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## RECONCILIATION – DAVID SNAPPER

*"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" (Matt. 5:23, 24).*

Jesus was clear. If a person claims we have hurt him or her, it is our responsibility to do four things:

1. Stop and pray, asking how we may have hurt others.
2. Take initiative. Even if you believe you are innocent, go to that person. Whether you meet face to face, write a letter, or talk by telephone, be the one to act first.
3. Humbly listen to the claim against you. Take it seriously. Express your heartfelt sorrow that you were involved in causing hurt to a brother or sister. Do your best to restore the relationship.
4. Resume your worship. After you have finished, offer your gift to God and you will be blessed.

Jesus indicates that resolving conflict has a higher priority than even worship. And although reconciliation is difficult, we must give it our best effort.

In following Jesus' words, we follow his actions. He came to us while we were yet sinners to bring peace and reconciliation, to restore us to worship.

We may have hundreds of excuses that keep us from attempting reconciliation. But the only valid reason for not doing so, in my opinion, is in cases where we believe the person intends to cause us physical harm. Otherwise the burden is on the person who caused the alleged harm to initiate reconciliation.

The same principles apply in congregational and denominational settings. In congregations where there is unresolved hurt, sides are frequently taken. No one seems willing to take the initiative to create peace and reconciliation. But the truth is that no one can be right in the eyes of Jesus when worship continues without reconciliation.

On a larger scale, the Christian Reformed Church has unresolved issues with the United Reformed Church, many of whose members withdrew from the CRC following the conflict over women in office. Twenty years after that split between brothers and sisters, I have read nothing to indicate that our leaders have attempted a reconciliation.

At the upcoming synod, our leaders will be dealing with complex problems, including members and worshipers with same-sex attractions. This could lead to another serious crisis.

So let's consider what Jesus teaches us about reconciliation. Whether you are a delegate or just watching the events of synod unfold, heed his words:

Stop to pray. Is there anyone who may have a complaint about the way they were treated in your church, or by you personally?

Take initiative. Make the phone call or get together and talk it out with grace and humility.

Humbly reconcile. Do your part to create reconciliation. Even if you have polar opposite opinions and will never agree, you can still be reconciled. You can, at the minimum, be respectful in your disagreement, just as Jesus was.

Resume worship. When you humbly attempt reconciliation, you will return to worship having experienced the heart of God.

## Additional Resources and Further Study

*Resources in italics are available at the resource table or in the church library.*

### **Books**

*[It's Not Supposed To Be This Way](#) by Lysa Terkeurst*

*[Forgiving What You Can't Forget](#) by Lysa Terkeurst*

*[Not the Way It's Supposed To Be: A Breviary of Sin](#) by Neal Plantinga*

*[The Gift of Pain: Why We Hurt and What We Can Do About It](#) by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey*

*[Where is God When It Hurts](#) by Philip Yancey*

*[If God is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil](#) by Randy Alcorn*

*[The Gift of Forgiveness](#) by Charles Stanley*

*[Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve](#) by Lewis B. Smedes*

*[The Art of Forgiving: When You Need to Forgive and Don't Know How](#) by Lewis B. Smedes*

*[Designed to Heal: What the Body Shows Us About Healing Wounds, Repairing Relationships, and Restoring Community](#) by Jennie A. McLaurin and Cymbeline Tancongo Culiati*

*[Healing the Heart of Your Church](#) by Dr. Kenneth Quick*

*[Dear God, Why Can't We Have a Baby?](#) by John and Sylvia Van Regenmorter*

*[When the Cradle is Empty](#) by John and Sylvia Van Regenmorter*

*Our library contains many more titles on the topic of grief*

### **Devotionals/Studies**

*[\(Un\)Hurt: The Healing Power of Forgiveness](#) by David Snapper*

### **Online resources**

[Reconciliation and Forgiveness Resources](#) – CRCNA Network

[The Colossian Forum](#)

[Georgetown Christian Reformed Church March 2021 CrossWords Connection Guide – “Why?”](#)