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sides do not seem to have reconciled. Does God require them to reconcile, or only to forgive? I think the whole study that follows, and its answer, can be summarized in the following story.

There was a wealthy man who had many children and owned a great deal of land. He loved his family and enjoyed spending time with them. However, when his children grew up, they all went to live abroad. The father missed them greatly, so he decided to build a seaside resort where each of them would have a place of their own while living close together. He announced the plan to his children, who liked it very much and agreed to return when the resort was finished. In the meantime, two of the sons became embroiled in a bitter conflict and no longer wanted to see each other. Their siblings tried to help and make peace between them, meeting separately with each brother. In those conversations, both brothers said that they had forgiven the other, but neither showed any intention of calling or meeting him. When the time comes for the siblings to return to their father and live close together, how will the father feel about this situation?

When we focus on God's heart and on the future time when he will dwell with humankind, I trust that the answer to this question is clear. To substantiate it through biblical teaching, I will take you through the meanings of the Hebrew and Greek words translated into English as 'forgive' and 'reconcile.'[1] We will then consider God's heart and actions, and his commands to us concerning forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation. In his great love, God gave us the ultimate example to imitate, and it is his will that matters above all else.

Before we start, let me just mention that it is important to distinguish our responsibility to pursue peace from our ability to restore a relationship. The other person's response is not our responsibility. There may be cases where the other person will not want to reconcile, or where it's even unsafe to return into a relationship. Please have this in mind when considering how to apply what is taught here.

Forgiveness

To forgive means to stop blaming or being angry with someone for something that person has done, or to refrain from punishing them for it.[2] It can also mean ceasing to feel resentment towards an offender or granting relief from payment.[3] It carries an image of giving.[4]

Reconciliation

Conciliation is the act of stopping someone from being angry. Reconciliation is the restoration of friendly relations: a renewal of friendship. In the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), several Greek words are translated as 'reconcile,' and nearly all are compounds that include the verb ἀλλάσσω (allassō), meaning 'to change' or 'to exchange.'[16]

Editor's note: This has been cut due to space, please search for this story on DisciplesToday.org for the entire article.

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Forgiveness and Reconciliation

UPCOMING EVENTS

Young Professionals New Year's Eve Party
Chicago, IL, USA
December 31, 2026

ICMC Europe
March 26-29, 2027
Budapest, Hungary

Western US Elders Retreat
April 8-11, 2027
Dallas-Fort Worth, TX, USA

Belong 2027
April 9-10, 2027
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July 19-26, 2027
Tanzania, Africa

ICMC
July 29-August 1, 2027
Denver, CO, USA

New England & Canada Cruise
September 7-17, 2027
Boston, MA, USA

Camino de Santiago
October 2-9, 2027
Baiona, Spain

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD

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November 12, 2026 • Tomislav Zrinski – London, England



This essay was written in response to a friend's question about forgiveness and reconciliation: when someone says they have forgiven another person but the relationship remains unrestored, does God require reconciliation as well? It seeks to clarify the distinction between forgiving an offense and restoring a relationship, and to consider what Scripture teaches about our responsibility to pursue peace.

The essay retains the form of a personal letter because it is intended to encourage its recipient, not merely to present an argument. The aim is to bring clarity and encouragement while recognizing that forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewed trust are related but distinct.

My dear friend,

It's been some time since you asked me to study what the Bible says about f orgiveness and reconciliation, and how the two are related. At first glance, they seemed quite similar and closely connected. I thought that if I had forgiven someone, this implied that I had also reconciled with that person. Careful study helped me understand the difference between them and, more importantly, perceive God's amazing heart and actions in providing forgiveness and reconciling everything to himself in Christ. It also helped me see clearly God's expectations of us and his instructions concerning forgiveness, peaceful living, and reconciliation. I am sorry for the delay in sending this to you. I sincerely hope it will edify you, either by giving you a better understanding of God's will in this regard or by reassuring you of what you already know.

You asked about relationships in which a person says that they have forgiven someone, but no steps are being taken to restore the relationship and the two

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