

SAYING “I’M SORRY”

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We are taught from an early age to say, “I’m sorry.” “I’m sorry represents our awareness of and regret for someone who is hurt by our words or behavior. We may not initially understand what we are saying or the need for this expression. However, it is not long before we begin to connect it’s meaning and the fruit associated with its use. The blessing that is associated with “I’m sorry” affects others and ourselves. Here are some examples.

The first example is founding the story of King Saul. In II Samuel 22:8, he is angry that people have not felt sorry for him. This time the word means “to be rubbed to the point of affliction” or to be polished.” Saul is an example of how a one sided experience of being sorry created his own affliction. Saul seems unable to take into consideration the impact of his behavior on David and his own son, Jonathon. The selfishness that develops is dangerous. It was a piece of the overall belief system that caused Saul to lose the kingdom. We are in danger of the same kind of loss in our relationships. When one can see both how they were hurt and how they hurt another, the result is increased ability to heal the offense, increased understanding of self/other and the ability to experience a renewed togetherness.

Another example is found in Psalm 38:18. “For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.” David writes this psalm during a time of chastening. It means to be anxious, to feel sorrow, or to take thought about our sin/behavior. Some use the argument that words/behavior may be unintentional. This may be so, however we all have hidden beliefs or judgments about our selves and others that interfere with relationships. It takes great courage and humility to “take thought” asking, “Why did I say that statement to so and so?” “What was going on with me that I chose that behavior at that time?” “Am I dismissing a value or dream that is important to the other person?” Answering these questions honestly takes time and thought. It is a sign of repentance. It is a part of being ‘polished’ in the character of the Lord.

In the New Testament we read various examples of people being made to feel sorry. (Matthew 14:9, 17:23, 18:31, II Corinthians 2:2, 7:8-9) Here the word sorry means “to distress, cause grief or to be in heaviness.”

Paul talks about one being made to feel sorry in correlation with godly sorry. In chapter seven of II Corinthians, Paul is expressing his conflicted feelings about correcting the Corinthians. He expresses his own sorrow about having to be the corrector. Paul provides an example of our first and second principles in that his being sorry is not one-sided. He considers the impact on the Corinthians and himself. Parents often feel this dilemma when they desire to take joy in their children, yet know they will cause their children sorrow because of needed correction. The experiences the same in His relationship with each of us.

We do well to measure the potential importance of our words/behavior. Are we willing to be in heaviness of spirit for a time in order to be used of God in the lives of those we love? Are we willing to be grieved and distressed when others confront our hurtful ways? The blessing is our being polished smooth in the development of our lives, reflecting the heart and character of the Lord.

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